Sailors and Marines reducing mishaps

BRAVO Zulu

Send BZs to: SAFE-Mech@navy.mil

AN David Bowles and AE3(AW) Heather Evanger
VFA-102

USS *Kitty Hawk* (CV-63) was preparing for night launches. A sense of urgency could be felt along the deck among the aircrew. The re-spot had not yet been completed, leaving precious little time for pre-flight checks. Rain just had stopped, leaving the deck wet and slippery. Water pooled between patches of nonskid, and a tractor driver and director struggled to maintain traction while spotting Diamondback 114.

This aircraft was being towed across the fantail in the landing area when the jet began to slip toward the port deck edge. The director stopped the move, regained control, and then directed the tractor driver to continue the move. The push was proceeding normally about 10 feet from the rounddown.

As the jet started moving aft, the plane captain (AN Bowles) was watching and waiting to prep the jet for launch. He was surprised to see the towbar's attaching points break away from the nosewheel axle, causing the towbar to drop down into the rims of the nosewheel. The tractor lost positive control of 114.

A yellowshirt was looking at the jet's port main-mount, ensuring safe separation from the scupper, and didn't realize the towbar had disengaged from the tow points on the nosewheel axle. The wing-walkers were looking at the director, unaware that 114 no longer was attached to the tractor. Seeing the aircraft rolling aft toward the rounddown, AN Bowles decided the tractor would be unable to stop the jet's movement. He promptly signaled for AE3 Evanger to apply the brakes. AE3 Evanger immediately applied the aircraft's emergency braking system, stopping the jet two feet from the rounddown. The jet was then chocked, chained, and inspected. AN Bowles discovered both nosewheel rims were bent, downing the jet for launch.

AN Bowles' quick and assertive actions saved an FA-18F Super Hornet and, more importantly, may have saved the life of AE3 Evanger.

Airman Michael Luebke
HM-14

While doing a daily inspection on an MH-53E, Airman Luebke noticed the alignment of the No. 1 engine's center-isolation mount was off-center. Further inspection revealed metal-to-metal contact between the engine-isolation mount and the quick-engine-change (QEC) frame. He immediately notified maintenance control and QA.

During QA's investigation, it was discovered the engine's torque-shaft housing was misaligned by one bolt, causing the engine mount to be off-center. Airman Luebke's strict attention to detail prevented a possible catastrophic failure of the QEC frame, resulting from undue stress caused by the misalignment.

AEAN Michael Reimann
HSL-46 Det 4

While Cutlass 467 was turning on deck, awaiting an amber deck to remove chocks and chains to launch on a C-Profile FCF, AEAN Reimann noticed a small piece of FOD come off the right side of the helicopter. He immediately signaled the LSE for entry into the rotor arc and retrieved the FOD from underneath the aircraft. He took the FOD (a small piece of rubber from the black, main, rotor-blade bumper) to the maintenance shop to ensure 467 still was safe for flight. AEAN Reimann's quick action and keen attention to detail ensured Cutlass 467 completed its FCF safely and that the FOD didn't cause a hazard to the aircraft, personnel on deck, or to the ship's RSD.

Sgt. Flaten
VMA-311 "Tomcats" (currently deployed to Al Asad Iraq)

Sergeant Flaten showed extreme attention to detail on the night of March 2, 2005, when he discovered a parachute-riser assembly for the ejection seat was installed wrong. Had this equipment been installed in an aircraft, the aircrew easily could have been led into thinking the improperly installed koch fitting and SEAWARS just were twisted. Had an aircrewman attached the riser to his torso harness, he would have put an unintentional twist into his parachute riser. This action could have resulted in serious injury to aircrew in the event of an ejection.

AM1(AW) Gary Garstin
VAQ-139

Petty Officer Garstin was troubleshooting a popped flap/slat circuit breaker when he noticed substantial grease build-up around the gearbox of a squadron EA-6B. A flaperon cable also was chafing against an adjacent hydraulic line. Upon further investigation, it was determined that all but two strands of the cable were severed, and the hydraulic line nearly was sawed in half.

His attention to detail prevented the loss of flight-control authority and averted a possible mishap.

AD2(AW) Daniel Masaveg
VQ-1

On Dec. 28, 2004, while deployed to Kadena AB, Japan, AD2 Masaveg discovered a fuel leak coming from the bottom of the No.1 engine. He was doing a daily inspection on an EP-3E at the time.

AD2 Masaveg notified the W/C 110 supervisor and QA. After opening the engine's nacelle doors, "A" panels, and lower nacelle-access panels, he didn't see any obvious leaks. Further troubleshooting by AD2 Masaveg, the W/C 110 supervisor, and QA concluded a low power turn was required to locate the source of the fuel leak. During this turn, fuel was seen leaking from the fuel manifold directly on the labyrinth seal. The No. 1 engine was shut down, the hard line was retorqued, and a second turn was performed to check for leaks. If left uncorrected, this problem likely would have caused an engine fire.

AD2 Masaveg's technical abilities, attention to detail, and active trouble-shooting skills aided in finding a potential fuel-fed engine fire that could have resulted in the loss of an aircraft and aircrew.

AD3(AW) Demacardo Williams
VFA-87

During flight operations, AD3(AW) Williams noticed that an access door located under the port horizontal stabilator was open during the recovery of a squadron aircraft. He immediately notified the plane captain to signal the aircrew to go hands out, to prevent switching valve checks that would have caused the stabilator to hit the access door. He secured the open door and returned control of the aircraft to the plane captain.

His quick action and attention to detail averted potential aircraft damage.

AD3 Brandon Joy
HSL-44 Det 1

During a daily inspection, Petty Officer Joy found fuel leaking from the pressure-refueling panel on Magnum 447. He quickly investigated the problem and isolated the leak to the pressure gauge. AD3 Joy directed the defueling of the aircraft and made a more in-depth inspection. He noticed the gauge body was loose, tightened and reinstalled it, then refueled the aircraft with no further problems.

AD3 Joy's superior technical knowledge and mechanical skills provided a mission-capable aircraft for armed helicopter missions in support of Straits of Gibraltar transit and Operation Active Endeavor.

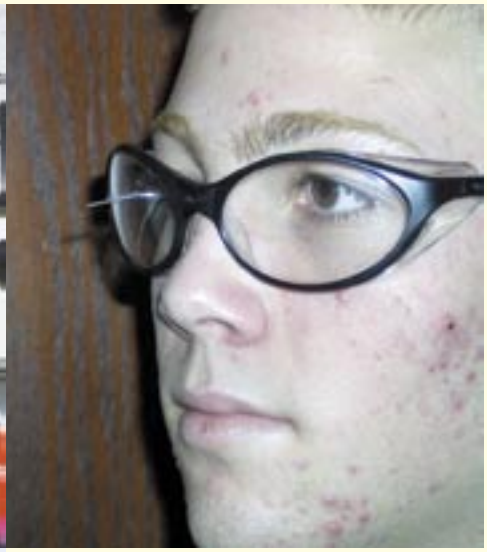
Sgt. Wiggins
VMFA-251

Aircraft 201, which just had come out of phase, needed a post-phase maintenance turn. Sgt. Wiggins began his pre-turn walk around per the checklist the way he had done at least a hundred times before. Prior to attaching the intake screens, he dove the duct for the No. 2 engine. He was moving through his standard procedures: counting the fan blades, checking the nose cone, looking for knicks or dents in the guide vanes and stators...again, all things that he had done many times before.

Sgt. Wiggins felt a very small "rough" spot on the back of one of the stators in the 7:30 position. He notified Maintenance Control and Quality Assurance.

An investigation revealed that a bushing had worn and seized, causing the joint between the inlet variable guide vane and the stator to become prematurely fatigued, which resulted in structural failure of the component. Had this gone unchecked for much longer, it would have certainly resulted in the IGV breaking off and being sucked into the compressor section.

Despite a heavy maintenance workload, Sgt. Wiggins did not take shortcuts. The result was that he saved an engine and possibly an aircraft and pilot.



LCpl. Chandler Bunting
VMFA-533

LCpl. Chandler Bunting (MOS 6048 flight-equipment technician) was sewing intake covers for the squadron's FA-18D aircraft. This particular night, he was the sole member of the night crew for his shop and was doing the right thing by wearing the required PPE for this activity: safety goggles. While sewing an exhaust cover, the needle of the sewing machine broke in half and sent the needle flying—straight toward his right eyeball. The needle came off with such force that it embedded in his safety goggles and actually penetrated the lens by one millimeter. The needle was aligned with his eye and would have ended up in his eyeball had he not been wearing the safety goggles. By following established procedures and doing the right thing, LCpl. Bunting saved his eyesight and prevented a serious mishap. His professionalism and attention to safety allowed him to continue working that night and accomplish the mission…safely. Everyone has seen the posters of the needle in the eyeball; hopefully, just as many people will see this picture of the needle in the safety goggles.

AD1(AW) Michael Shealy
VFA-87

While serving as the line division LPO Oct. 4, 2004, Petty Officer Shealy distinguished himself through exemplary performance and unwavering dedication to duty. During flight operations at NAS Oceana, in support of unit-level training, he noticed a drill bit laying on the ground in the fire lane of the War Party flight line. He then searched the immediate vicinity and found four more drill bits on the ground. He immediately notified maintenance control, and flight operations temporarily were suspended while a combat FOD walkdown was held. A quick assessment revealed the source of the hard FOD was a flight-line vendor. The wing was notified, and squadrons at NAS Oceana were alerted to the potential FOD hazard that existed on their flight lines. His quick and decisive actions and attention to detail averted potential damage to the War Party aircraft. If left unnoticed, the drill bits could have caused catastrophic damage, costing thousands of dollars and lost sorties. His acute attention to detail during high-tempo and high-visibility flight operations highlights his commitment to excellence through professionalism and safety.

AM3 Aaron Fugate
HSL-44 Det 1

During a 56-day special inspection on Magnum 447, Petty Officer Fugate noticed what appeared to be a crack in the sealant on a main-rotor tip-cap. Investigating further, he carefully removed the sealant and found that the tip-cap was cracked and needed replacement.

AM3 Fugate's meticulous attention to detail and thoroughness ensured that Magnum 447 was available to conduct assigned missions in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in the Northern Arabian Gulf. His efforts prevented damage and a potential mishap.